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Chapman, F. M.

1897. Preliminary Descriptions of New Birds from Mexico and Arizona. *Auk*, xiv, pp. 310-311.

Brief diagnosis (p. 311) of "*Coccothraustes vespertinus mexicanus*", from Las Vigas, Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Ridgway, R.

1901. Birds of North and Middle America. Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. no. 50, part 1, pp. xxx+715, pls. xx.

Diagnoses (pp. 38-39), of three races of *Hesperiphona*—*vespertina*, *montana*, and *mexicana*—and descriptions and synonymies of same (pp. 39-44).

Berkeley, California, December 5, 1916.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Western Belted Kingfisher Breeding in San Diego County, California.—It is not an uncommon occurrence to meet with an occasional Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon caurina*) near some river, slough or lake in this county; but not until this year have I succeeded in locating a nest. This was quite accidental.

On the 20th of April, 1916, while driving along a road bordering a lagoon near Oceanside my curiosity was aroused by noting some dirt bluffs which formed the walls of a steep narrow canyon. It at once suggested to me an ideal home for a Duck Hawk. Without waiting to debate the question with myself I at once tied the horse and made my way to the canyon. A few shots I knew would bring forth the falcons if present. Imagine my surprise, however, as the echo from the report died away to hear the cackling screeches of a Kingfisher. In a few moments it was joined by its mate coming in from the lagoon.

I dropped behind a bunch of brush and in a few moments one of the birds flew directly to a small hole in the bluff and disappeared, while the mate returned to the lagoon.

The nesting cavity proved to be ten feet below the top of the bank and twenty feet from the bottom. I soon secured a pick and shovel from a ranch a few miles distant and started what proved to be a real task. Two hours of hard digging and a warm sun on my back helped me to decide that it was too early anyway for a full set, so I left it for a couple of weeks.

On May 6 I returned resolved to reach the nest. After four hours of manual labor I at last reached the soft stratum of sand in which the nest cavity was located. I had dug my pit so that it would be to one side of the nest chamber, for by so doing I hoped to reach the nest from the side, but I had not calculated on a winding tunnel and when about a foot above the entrance my pick broke into the extreme end of the passage. I cleaned away the loose sand and soon exposed a nest full of young fully feathered and nearly ready to leave for the lagoon. There were six in all. They were very quiet and made no remonstrance when removed from the nest and examined. They were all returned to their underground passage which was carefully closed with a resolve that if I ever found another Kingfisher's nest in San Diego County I would not wait until May before investigating.—N. K. CARPENTER, *Escondido, California*.

Another Alaska Record for the Mourning Dove.—On September 1, 1916, while standing on the dock at Hydaburg, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska, a Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) flew by within twenty-five feet. This is the first time that I have met with the species in the region.—GEORGE WILLETT, *Elephant Butte, New Mexico, November 24, 1916*.

The Florida Gallinule in San Francisco County.—On October 12, 1916, it was reported to me that a Rail had appeared on Middle Lake, one of the Chain-of-Lakes, Golden Gate Park, which did not resemble any of those most commonly seen. Accordingly I

made a trip to the park on October 15; and on approaching the lake, I saw, swimming near some lily pads, a waterbird which appeared to be a very nervous Coot, but on second sight proved to be something different, although there was a similarity in size and shape.

The field description is as follows: Head, neck, and throat, sooty gray; wings, rich brownish color, the outer primaries being edged with white; the under parts of the tail were also white, like that of the coot. The bill and shield were of a yellowish color, as were the legs, which were very long.

This bird, evidently a Florida Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) was seen up to and including November 13, either walking over the lily pads, feeding on the banks, or swimming on the lake, which it did in true Coot fashion.

Judging from skins seen at the University of California, the Gallinule seen at the park is an immature specimen. Mrs. Morton Gibbons also saw the Gallinule, and identified it as such before knowing my views. This record should be of interest to San Francisco ornithologists as this is but the second time this species has been reported for this county, although it has been found breeding around Los Baños.—HAROLD E. HANSEN, *San Francisco, California, November 23, 1916.*

The Valley Quail Occupying Nests of the Road-runner.—On the afternoon of April 10, 1915, near San Diego, in company with Mr. A. M. Ingersoll, a female Valley Quail (*Lophortyx c. vallicola*) was discovered by the latter sitting close, and apparently incubating, upon what proved to be a deserted nest of the Road-runner (*Geococcyx californianus*). This nest had been built, well in toward the center and about two feet above the ground, in a large lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) bush. Investigation showed the nest to contain three eggs, warm to the touch, and the fragments of a fourth, all of the Road-runner; two eggs were rotten, and one was cracked, discolored, with contents dried.

Another instance of the Valley Quail occupying a nest of the Road-runner came under my observation this past season (1916), and is particularly noteworthy for the fact that the nest was eight and one-half feet above a dry wash. During the forepart of April the nest received finishing touches and was evidently ready for the depositing of eggs, when it was deserted by the Road-runners; it had been built among the terminal branches of a drooping sycamore limb, and was about five feet from, and almost on a level with, the top of an abrupt bank skirting the wash at this point. In passing under the nest on April 30 I was quite surprised to flush a Valley Quail from it, and to find that four eggs



Fig. 6. VALLEY QUAIL OCCUPYING NEST OF ROADRUNNER, 8½ FEET ABOVE GROUND IN A SYCAMORE.

had been deposited. There were thirteen eggs on May 14, when next visited. Possibly two dozen small feathers of the quail distributed over the surface of the lining formed the only noticeable addition to the nest material. While removing a few overhanging leaves preparatory to securing, from the nearby bank, a photograph, the female left the nest and it might be interesting to note that it was a trifle over fifteen minutes before she returned. Several photographs were attempted and again she departed, this time remaining away seventeen minutes.—HAROLD M. HOLLAND, *Los Angeles, California*.

Game Bird Conditions in Sutter County, California.—I have just come from a shooting trip at the West Butte Country Club, in Sutter County, California. The shooting grounds comprise a swamp and overflowed land along Butte Creek. The birds there—the ducks and geese—are in numbers beyond description. There must be several thousand swans, and there are certain favorite localities in which all these birds seem to congregate at certain times. The rice fields adjoining are now all drained. Great quantities of the birds go to the rice fields at night and there feed upon the waste rice that has been threshed out by the wind, blackbirds, etc. The farmers regard this as a positive benefit, since it cleans their land of what would otherwise be an annoying and worthless volunteer crop during the following year. All the farmers bear testimony to this, and their grounds are all posted forbidding shooting. Toward daylight the birds move down to the marshlands literally in myriads. Some of the Mallards are fairly wobbling in their flight, and their crops and necks distorted, with the rice they have eaten.—F. W. HENSHAW, *San Francisco, November 21, 1916*.

The Snowy Owl in Humboldt County, California.—Two specimens of the Snowy Owl (*Nyctea nyctea*) taken in Humboldt County, California, have been recently sent to me to be mounted. One was secured by W. Snow, at Trinidad, the other by Thomas Johnson, at Upper Mattole, November 17, 1916. An old newspaper clipping in my possession describes a previous flight of Snowy Owls in this region during December, 1896.—FRANKLIN J. SMITH, *Eureka, California*.

Western Grebe Breeding in Southern California.—On May 13, 1916, I secured a set of eggs of the Western Grebe at Mystic Lake, Riverside County, California. The nest was in a thin clump of tules, close to the edge, and floating on water about two and a half feet deep. It resembled that of the Pied-billed Grebe in structure and appearance, but was at least twice the size. The eggs were three in number and far advanced in incubation. The parent bird was seen, and heard making a cackling noise like the croaking of a great toad.—I. D. NOKES, *Los Angeles, California*.

Notes on the Western Grasshopper Sparrow.—Breeding localities of the Western Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum bimaculatus*) seem to be few and far between in California. The coastal zone in the southern part of the state seems to be more favored than elsewhere, and by occasional notes of the sort here presented we will in time be able to state more exactly the range of this species.

In middle June of 1915, in company with Ralph Arnold, I noted this bird in rather large numbers on the extreme western end of the Santa Monica Mountains in southeastern Ventura County, California. The hills here have steep slopes entirely bare of vegetation other than grasses, while the canyons harbor a few live oaks and some thickets of shrubs. High up on the northern slopes of these open grassy hills and about two miles from the ocean were found many pairs of the bird. Their peculiar buzzing note called attention to their presence; otherwise they might have been overlooked, for in their habits they seldom fly, preferring to run along the ground between and beneath the tufts of grass.

Three nests were found on June 12, 1915. Two of these were practically finished though containing no eggs, while the third contained three eggs in which incubation had just begun. The first nest, which contained the eggs, was discovered through the bird being flushed almost from beneath my feet and was located near the summit of one of the highest hills. The other two nests were found through search and were also located only a short distance away on the upper slopes of the same hill.

The nests were identical in every way. They were placed in slight depressions at the base of the northern or leeward sides of large tufts of grass and were composed entirely of fine dry grasses with no appreciable lining. They were poorly built and the one

in which the eggs were, almost fell to pieces when taken. The eggs are nearly pure white, sparsely marked on the large end with small pinkish spots, and are bluntly ovate in shape.—J. R. PEMBERTON, *Colton, California*.

The Baird Sandpiper in the State of Washington.—Until the present fall of 1916, to the best of my knowledge, we have had nothing but "sight records" for this species (*Pisobia bairdii*) as a visitor to Washington. In my own experience of nineteen years I have never even seen it before. Therefore, it was with the greatest interest that Mr. Stanton Warburton, of Tacoma, and the writer found them in fair numbers on the Tacoma flats during the latter part of July, August, and early September, 1916. The first was a female, seen and collected on July 26. A male was collected on August 5, another male on the 11th, a male on August 29, and the last seen was a male taken on September 5. They never appeared in flocks, usually flying in two's and three's, four being the largest number seen together at any one time. The other small sandpipers did not seem to interest them much, as they were usually found alone or in the company of one or two Semi-palmated Plover (*Aegialitis semipalmata*); however, the few times that we saw them flying with flocks of other small sandpipers, they separated from the main flock as soon as they stopped to feed.—J. HOOPER BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington*.

Vermilion Flycatcher near Los Angeles.—On March 3, 1916, I secured an adult male Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus mexicanus*) at Nigger Slough, Los Angeles County.—I. D. NOKES, *Los Angeles, California*.

How Does the Shrike Carry its Prey?—I want to report the behavior of California Shrike (*Lanius l. gambeli*) in carrying a dead bird. The shrike flew against a window pane near where I was, and dropped a dead "White-crown". When the sparrow was picked up again it was seized by the neck, and the shrike flew off with it. But before it had gone more than a yard, and while about a foot in the air, the shrike released its hold on the neck of the prey, and, without hesitating or altering its course, caught the sparrow in its feet. The flight was continued for about fifteen yards, and then the shrike dropped to the ground. It started off at once and the same behavior was repeated; the prey was picked up by the neck with the beak and this hold was given up, while flying, for the hawk hold. The substitution is almost instantaneous; the burden does not drop perceptibly and the flight is continuous and steady.

Since I had never seen this before, I have wondered whether the actions noted are usual or not.—C. O. ESTERLY, *Scripps Institution, La Jolla, California, December 30, 1916*.

Notes on the California Jay in Humboldt County.—In the September issue of THE CONDOR, Mr. Joseph Mailliard records the California Jay (*Aphelocoma c. californica*) from the vicinity of Humboldt Bay. I was with Mr. Mailliard when the bird referred to was taken. This was back of Arcata, some distance from the coast and above the red-wood timber line.

On November 13, 1916, I traveled from Eureka to Petrolia, 55 miles south of Humboldt Bay. While passing over the ridge known as the Wild Cat, 29 miles from Eureka, I saw two California Jays below the road, perched in hazel-nut bushes. Upon trying to secure one, the birds became aware of my actions and immediately took refuge in a dense growth of spruce. I returned to the road and passed over a small ridge into another gulley where, perched on a fence post near the road, was another California Jay. It showed no concern till I stepped onto a nearby knoll, when it flew to a spruce tree nearby taking a stand on the outer end of a limb. It was closely followed by another jay which had been concealed in the brush. This was in sight of the ocean and but two miles distant from it.

On the 15th of the same month I found the California Jay common along the county road running from Petrolia to Briceland, in southern Humboldt County.

Today, December 26, while passing over a bit of our new highway but two miles distant from the south end of Humboldt Bay, at the head of a small gulch, altitude less than 50 feet, two of these jays crossed the road directly in front of me and flew into a nearby willow; one perched itself in plain view while the other disappeared in the dense undergrowth. The point where these two jays were seen is eleven miles by road from Eureka and approximately two miles air-line from the ocean.—C. I. CLAY, *Eureka, California, December 26, 1916*.